



Jack Reed
Oral History Transcription
August 1, 2001 [Side B]

Interviewed by: Greg Balue

Place of interview: Civil Rights Heritage Center

Date of interview: August 1, 2001

Approximate length of interview: 32 minutes

Transcribed by: Zoë Morgan, Student Worker, Civil Rights Heritage Center

Date of transcription: May 2020

Summary: Jack Reed was the assistant to Joe Kernan, Mayor of South Bend from 1988 to 1997. He spoke of the experiences that led to him becoming assistant to Mayor Kernan, as well as his time as Battalion Chief and becoming the first black riding chief for the South Bend Fire Department. Reed also discussed his experience with racism and discrimination in the South when he would show horses.

0:00:06 [Jack Reed] Well, in a sense, when he started working for Steve, I mean, he still did, I say, he was kind of like part time here. He worked at the Police Department. I don't think he went on a sabbatical leave because he still worked the Police Department in uniform and came up here and worked. See, whereas with me, I left the Fire Department and came up here on a sabbatical leave, and maybe after three, four years, then I decided that things were gonna be okay. I got my time in as far as the pension, and then I just started staying up here all the time.

[Les Lamon] What do you think accounted—what took place between 1957, '58 when you got turned down by the state police and 1976 when Pete Nemeth felt comfortable appointing you Chief, Battalion Chief? What caused that? What took place in the meantime there that changed the environment in South Bend?

0:01:07 [JR] Personally, Les, I think I always say there's two things that we, people of color, be it Hispanic, Black, whatever the case might be, have to have. First of all, there has to be an awareness. The second thing that has to happen is the power structure has to be aware of this awareness and willing to do something about it. The Pete Nemeths, the Joe Dorns, the Steve Leuckles, the Frank O'Bannons, the Joe Kernans of the world. Without these kind of folks, there's just certain things, Les, that just don't happen. I don't give a dang how much education you get or how qualified you are, those are two ingredients that you have to have: the awareness and the power structure willing to do something about it. To be aware and not move on it... and Pete Nemeth was that type, so was Joe, Steve.

[Greg Balue] What made them aware?

[JR] I think what made them aware, realizing that being the type of people that they are, it was an injustice.

[LL] There must have been then—

0:02:09 [JR] It wasn't pressure from any groups or anything like that, not with Pete Nemeth making me Chief. There wasn't any pressure, none whatsoever, just that he wasn't that kind of person. When his father, if you can remember, got in that little bind and everything, Pete Mullins called me, he said, "Jack, Pete Nemeth is just torn apart with the article that came out in the paper about his dad". He said, "Would you do me a favor?" I said, "Sure". "Would you call him?" I said, "Yeah". So rather than call him, I call Luther Taylor and asked Luther would he go over with me. We went over to his office and he broke down and cried. He said, "He's my father and I love him, but I do not share his views." I said, "Well Pete, that's the reason I'm here". I said, "Personally, I think you should go for the job". He looked at me and he said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Oh, yeah". I wrote a letter to

the governor, and also, I sent a tape down state. I still have a copy of it. Sent a tape down state cause I just couldn't put in writing what I needed to say. So, I sent a tape down state. I'm not saying that that's what got Peter Nemeth the judgeship, but I'm just wanting the Governor, Bayh and his staff, to know what kind of man that they're considering, you know. I hear this old saying that apples fall close by the tree, not always true, not always true. No. No.

[LL] It seems like those kind of things... there's a generational difference.

[JR] That's right.

0:03:43 [LL] It's kinda maybe, it's like the little girl that you were talking about, you know. She's my guess is, color doesn't mean the same thing to her with those two little babies as it maybe would have meant to her mother, but certainly not what it did to her grandmother. You gotta believe it.

[JR] And I do, Les, like I said, you know, we were taught that when these negative things happen you just have to build on the positive things. Sometimes the positive thing is just being able to get out of bed every morning. That's a very positive thing as far as I'm concerned. They're there, you have to look for 'em. You just need to look.

[GB] I need some specifics. I hate to interrupt, but I need some real specifics here. You were born in Brown—

[JR] Brownsville, Tennessee.

[GB] And when did you move up here?

[JR] I was born in '34, so we probably moved here in '38 or '39.

[GB] Okay, and where did you move, live basically?

0:04:41 [JR] All over. Now I say all over, we were a very poor family and through the help of my uncle, Mr. Harris, we were able to survive. My mother did day work, that's about all she could do; she wasn't very well educated. Making 35, 50 cents an hour. Walking to work, cleaning homes, and didn't have to lose herself respect in order to do so. That was just a blessing for my sisters and myself, you know, realizing that it was a struggle. It was tough.

[GB] Your father wasn't with you?

[JR] No, my mother and father divorced at, after a fashion. It was just my mom, my two sisters, and myself.

[LL] You said your uncle...

[JR] Mr. Harris.

[LL] Was that her brother, or...?

[JR] No, it was her uncle and my great uncle, her mother's brother. He moved from Tennessee and started working at Studebakers and got on his feet and guy couldn't even read or write. Dick White... Well educated all the kids and had us brought up here and through my other uncle too, Mr. Harris's brother, Robert Harris, and this was John Harris and that's how we survived. With the help of my two uncles and their family. I worked since I was twelve years old. I worked two jobs ever since I was twelve years old up until 1987. I had to bring all my money home all the time, I couldn't spend it. Cutting grass and pulling weeds from peppermint fields, and every kind of job you could possibly think of I worked 3 jobs at one time just to make ends meet really.

[GB] Did— when you moved, was it always into black neighborhoods?

0:06:16 [JR] No, not necessarily. At one time, I spoke Hungarian pretty well. My best buddy was Steve Saroka. Steve and his mother didn't speak English. No, it was an integrated neighborhood, pretty much most of my life, really. I don't know that I've ever lived in a predominantly black neighborhood other than now. I don't know that I ever have.

[GB] That's interesting.

[JR] You know, it really is back in the '40s and '50s, and God, we just didn't have the problems that people are having now. None whatsoever.

[GB] That was up here?

[JR] Yeah.

[GB] You say you used to go back home—

[overlapping conversation]

0:06:57 [JR] Yeah, but when I went back home it was completely different. I mean, I can remember one year I was down there, they always bought me big overalls and I still wear 'em now, I just love 'em. My aunt took me in a store and there was a young lady, I'll never forget it, that waited on me, and I said, "Yes", to her and boy, I tell you, she gave me a look like you wouldn't believe. My aunt took me out of the store immediately and I'll never forget. Whenever she took me around any relatives she always, "Don't take this boy to town". I just hated that word.

[GB] It could have been, "Yes, ma'am?"

[JR] Oh, yes, and I still say, "Yes, ma'am", and, "No, ma'am". Even right now, today, to adults. I mean it's just the way I was raised. I don't care whether you're black or white. If think you deserve it, "Yes, sir, no, sir".

[LL] It's kind of a southern thing.

0:07:40 [JR] That's, that's right. I still take my hat off, or my cap off in the elevator. I mean or I still tip my cap 60 some years later at senior citizens, ladies especially. That's the way I was taught, you know. It's a southern thing, you know. Yes, ma'am, and no, ma'am. My nephew Raphael, "Yes, ma'am, and no ma'am". It's really interesting with him. Many years ago, Dr. Grayson lived across the street from us and would always have us say mister or misses. Dr. Grayson said he saw Raphael not too long ago, and said first thing he said, "Hi, Mr. Dr. Grayson." He didn't realize as a kid, you know, that you can drop that Mr. "Hi, Mr. Dr. Grayson. 'Yeah, and it was just just being respectful. That's all it was. Just the way we were taught, and then being southern, from a southern family.

[GB] But down there, you had to be very respectful especially—

0:08:32 [JR] You were afraid is what it amounted to. You just were scared to death, and they just they didn't allow me to go into town until I got older.

[GB] You didn't have that problem up here, but you were still respectful. But I mean you weren't actually afraid to go anywhere around here, were you?

[JR] No, there were neighborhoods I would go into like when I was cutting grass or something like that. They would use that "n word," and I'd freeze up and keep walking, and go ahead and cut the grass and walk back home, or ride my bike, or whatever that happened.

[LL] You mentioned that episode when you went back South. Of course, what immediately comes to my mind is that's the Emmett Till story. Were you, cause Emmett Till was a bit younger than you, were you familiar up here when that episode happened?

0:09:20 [JR] Mmhmm. I was in Chicago, staying, not living, just visiting some friends. All over the news, media and radio people from Chicago were getting in cars and gonna head South, and I think they pretty much curtailed that. Oh, yeah, I remember that real well. I remember it quite well.

[LL] Any impression particularly?

[JR] Sorry for the young man, of course. It's been so long ago. I mean, I wasn't the type that wanted to jump in the car and go try to make things right...

[LL] But, you didn't identify necessarily that your story might have been similar to that. I mean, said, "By the grace of God, this could have been me?"

[JR] At that time, no, I don't think so, Les. I don't think so. I don't remember thinking that. Cause like I say, when this happened, I couldn't have been much older, 13 or 14 when— and the young lady was only about, if I remember correctly, 17 or 18. But, it just scared my aunt and uncle to death. I didn't go into town anymore until I got grown, they just wouldn't allow it, prayed for me. Then when I got older and would go down, and I'll never forget, my relatives and I'd go in stores. "Yes, sir, no, sir", and this and that. I'll never forget my aunt said, "Well, I really appreciate", and it was different then. "I really appreciate you not coming down here showboating because you don't know someone." I said, "No, I wouldn't do that", cause I realize they still have to live there. That things have changed.

0:10:43 Then I showed horses for a great number of years, and I spent an awful lot of time in Tennessee and Kentucky. The first time I ever experience colored restrooms or drinking fountains was in Shelbyville, Tennessee at a horse show.

[LL] Walking horses. You were walking the horses?

[JR] Yep, mmhmm.

[LL] Oh, I see. Oh.

[JR] there's two of 'em right there.

[LL] When was that?

0:11:03 [JR] Oh, that was back in the '60s, cause, I think it was '63 or '64, cause '65 is when they integrated. I can remember they had one night down in Shelbyville, they called it the groom night, where the black trainers could show horses in one class. Four sections in the beautiful stadium, and blacks could sit in one area. One area. Saturday night when they crowned the Worlds Champion, I'll never forget, show started at 7 o'clock. We didn't get there until about 4:30, 5 o'clock, and sat down in the black section. We didn't get a chance to sit anywhere because other folks would come and if there wasn't enough room, they would take up your section, but you weren't allowed to do that.

[LL] They could come into your section?

[JR] Oh, yeah.

[LL] But, you couldn't go in their section?

[JR] Oh, no. Oh, no.

[LL] Now did you— when— did you quarter horses here that you kept here?

0:11:52 [JR] Yeah, I kept a horse in Michigan, a quarter horse, many years ago. Then I bought my first walking horse, went down to Alabama and I brought a walking horse, and I put a couple horses in training. I never actually showed at the celebration, but I had horses that showed there. This horse right here, that was one of my partners, Adamore, Kentucky, Avery Martin. That horse, we showed him in Tennessee, did quite well with him.

[LL] My wife's family is part of the [inaudible].

0:12:30 [JR] I know where it is, America's Grove. But that was the first time I'd actually ever experienced drinking out of a colored fountain and using a colored bathroom. Then when they integrated in '65, it was real different, in a sense, but the people in the South were very apprehensive. They had some trainers by the name of Witherspoon. They were top trainers in the country, and he showed in the state class, well, in the stallion class that Thursday or Friday and was gonna come back in the state class. But he got so many threats he didn't come back.

[GB] This is way off the record, but this is really interesting. Were there many black people that showed horses at the...

[JR] Well, yeah, trainers, that's what I was saying, there was one night a week they call it groom night. You showed in one class and it was called groom class. Black trainers could show in that class. That's the only time they could show. Usually they were showing horses that belonged to the people that they worked for. Very few had their own horses.

[LL] I can't tell from the way the light is, but it looks like perhaps your partner is white.

[JR] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

[LL] So did you use him in order to show? Was there a problem about you as an owner?

0:13:40 [JR] No. This happened many years later. I met Eddy Ray at a horse show, and he was just a real nice guy, a professional trainer. I fell in love

with a young three-year-old. I had another partner that was white from Elkhart, and we were down there taking some horses from the train and saw a horse that he was working that we fell in love with. The three of us went together and bought the horse, and that's what happened to that. But he was a decent guy, good guy, matter of fact. Just a good guy.

[LL] But, you didn't have any problems showing your horses?

[JR] No, no, no. Cause back in the '60s, I was showing horses, but not in the South. I would go to the horse shows, and had people showing for me, but I didn't start showing in the South.

[GB] You owned the horse and had white people showing the horse.

[JR] Mmhmm.

[LL] You would not have been able to show it yourself?

[JR] No, no. Not back in the early, in the '60s, no.

0:14:28 [LL] You mentioned something about the restrooms... any of these things just pop up? Did you ever encounter anything like that in South Bend where you could not use a restroom? Like a public or private restroom?

[JR] Not that I recall.

[LL] Okay.

[JR] It's just like with the Philadelphia. I knew I wasn't welcome so—

[LL] You just didn't go in.

[JR] I just didn't go in. Yeah, I never experienced that.

[GB] You must have gone to a lot of different schools then if you moved around a lot. Did you remember anything specific in there...?

[JR] In school?

[GB] Yeah.

[JR] Oh, yeah, the name calling. Once in awhile, yeah.

[GB] Yeah, which was my other students, but was there anything from school policy that seemed to discriminate against the blacks specifically?

[JR] No. I don't recall that happening, no.

[LL] Do you remember the first time you had a black teacher ?

[JR] I don't know that I ever had a black teacher to be honest with you.

[LL] Is that so?

0:15:23 [JR] Yeah, cause I went to predominantly white schools. I went to Elder, I went to Franklin, after Elder burned down, I went to Franklin and then to Riley. I don't know that I ever had a black teacher to be honest with you. I'm very sure if I had it, they were stuck out in the mud. I don't recall ever having a black teacher.

[LL] Black teachers then were basically assigned to Linden or predominantly black schools.

[JR] Right. I don't recall, I don't recall there being a black teacher at Riley, to be honest with you. I don't recall it. I don't remember having a black teacher. I don't recall ever having a black teacher, to be honest with you.

[GB] Probably would've made an impression on you too, so.

[JR] Yeah, I'm very sure they would have. I'm very sure that's something I would have remembered, you know. Like I said, I've been out of school a long, long time.

[LL] A year or two.

[JR] Yeah, its like a year or two really.

0:16:10 [LL] Tell me about the '50s and '60s here when the Civil Rights Movement was going on in, particularly noticeable in the South, but also in Chicago and places like that. Do you remember any episodes or any organizations that stood out in South Bend that were particularly progressive in terms of doing away with some of the discrimination?

[JR] Oh, yeah, the NAACP. Oh, yeah.

[LL] An individual? Who was the head of the NAACP [overlapping conversation]?

[JR] No, I really don't remember about... who was that? Jess Dickinson, I can remember, was down state and did an awful lot.

[LL] Really?

0:16:48 [JR] Yeah, did an awful lot. Of course, some of the teachers, you know, um Algie Oldham, Ed Meyers, Peggy Escripte. Just some of the people that paved the way and did all the right things and made people realize we'd been given an opportunity and we could do it. We could do it. There's a lot of ways that you can fight the Civil Rights things. Like I say, learn to sell yourself, without people thinking you're an Uncle Tom, if you understand what I'm saying.

[LL] You ever been called an Uncle Tom?

0:17:25 [JR] Yeah. I have it happen up here every once in awhile. Not too much lately that... When I first got here in '88, with people of color didn't quite understand, they just felt that by the nature of my job that all the wrongs that have happened in the past, I can make 'em right. I've had people come here just sit where you're sitting now with problems and situations that just... nothing I could do about it because it was against the law. I've had people of color, "Well if you can't do me any good what in they hay are you doing here then?" And that hurts, but I understand their frustrations. I understand their frustrations. I have someone I have to answer to. I've had calls, "I want you to fire this person", and this, and it's not my job to hire or fire. Or, "My son's in jail and you don't have connections you can't help me here", or whatever the case might be, and politely explain to 'em and hope they understand. Another thing that I try to be aware of too, after I come up here, even after I went on the Fire Department and became Chief, that I made it my business to make sure that whatever I did 30 years ago, I wanna be that same person.

0:18:39 It was really interesting. A very good friend of mine, after I become chief— Usually we would see each other and talk. He had to leave school at a very early age because of illness, so far and so on like that. I went by his house one day, he said, "I'm real happy that you came by." He said, "I really thought that since you got that big job downtown that you were getting a little uppity". I said, "Child, you've got to be out your mind." I said, "Man, I've just been busy", and it's interesting how people will feel or think that. I was on the elevator one day with Joe and the City Attorney, and there was a young man who was on the elevator and had a drinking problem and lives at the Center for the Homeless. So, I introduced him. I said "[inaudible]", and I told Joe, "I want you to meet a very good friend of mine [inaudible]." Did you know he called me and thanked me for that? He said, "Jack, I'm nothing." I said, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait a minute." He said, "I'm nothing". He said, "You thought enough to introduce me to the Mayor and to the City Attorney". He said, "Man you have no idea how I felt. I appreciate it." I said, "It's just the thing to do man. You're my friend, man. You're my friend."

[GB] You know what I was gonna ask about? Church. were you involved with church? Was your mother religious?

[JR] Oh yes.

[GB] Does a lot of your... the way you are...

0:19:54 [JR] No, because of my mother. I have to give the credit there and church played an important part. But you have to remember, back in those days,

whether you were black or white, if you saw me doing something wrong you could spank my, uh huh, and then tell my mama or dad, and I got another when I got home. Yeah, I'm serious. That's just the way it was. You just learned to respect everyone.

My mother had what she called the "Three C's": we couldn't complain, criticize, or condemn, and she lived by that. We couldn't use the word "what". Not in our household. You're like, "Jack?" "What?" No why; yes, ma'am, yes, sir. We couldn't use the word, but she always said there's one c that you can use.

[GB] What's that?

[JR] Learn to care, about yourself, your sisters, your family, your fellow man, whatever the case might be. That's on C. Those other three C's, we couldn't. Not saying that when we weren't around our parents we wouldn't once in awhile, but that is something I kind lived with really.

[LL] It's a good motto.

0:21:03 [JR] Three c's she called 'em. You couldn't criticize, complain, or condemn. We're poor, but we have a lot to be thankful for, and we were poor.

[LL] What role did the church play? Again, because Greg and group of students, some folks in the Civil Rights Movement. Were they particularly conscious of social responsibilities and social issues, or were they pretty much Sunday morning spiritual concern?

[JR] They were conscious. I think most of us, especially some of the older blacks that were not for the churches, I don't know if we would've survived. There was never a problem there really. Churches were our backbone. That's about all we could do. Maybe go to a job, spent a lot of time at church...

[LL] Any particular church comes to mind here that might be, have a special role to play in being sort of the leaders in putting pressure on the city or supporting the human rights commission or...?

0:22:18 [JR] Yes, I would say Dr. Bernard White, who was the pastor, he's deceased now, at Greater St. John. Also, Reverend Charles Rowlette, back in those days. Of course, Reverend [inaudible] has done a tremendous job in later years, but that was before his time. Reverend White and Reverend Rowlette. Excellent job.

[GB] That was at Greater Baptist?

[JR] Yeah. Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church. Also, Pilgrim Baptist Church that really got involved.

0:22:50 [LL] If you were attempting this project, who would you see as people that you oughta talk to? We come to you and we got a number of other people recommended to us. Who should we talk to?

[JR] I mean some of the older folks are—

[LL] Older folks— People that would have recollections such as yours, materials such as you've shared with us, and perhaps even maybe people that were, would've been leaders in bringing about change.

[JR] Les, I'd say most of them are in that book. I would think.

[LL] I noticed you got— I saw Ed Myers, Algie Oldham... [overlapping conversation]

[JR] Oh, yeah, yeah. Cause that's the bottom line, education.

[LL] Mrs. Braboy.

[JR] Oh, most definitely, yeah.

[LL] Sorry we lost Miss King.

[JR] Yeah, I was just at her funeral just a week ago.

[LL] Yeah. [inaudible] I tell you we're losing people.

[JR] Yeah, something we're all gonna have to do eventually.

[LL] That's right.

0:23:59 [JR] I just wanted to share a little story here, if I may, this State Police thing. That's something that gnawed at me for a long time, man, I mean, just... Back in those days, gentlemen, they wore the hats like they wear now, and the high boots. You didn't see State Police with bellies on 'em, I mean, just... Oh, man, it was the elite. You wouldn't believe what they looked like. I just felt that it was really an injustice. Then when O'Bannon and Kernan took office, I come to work every morning at 5 o'clock, and I was sitting at Denise's desk one day and had to be looking at the paper. Lo and behold it was Mayor, I'm sorry, Governor O'Bannon, Mel Carroway, who's the superintendent of State Police, you know who he is?

[LL] No, I don't know him.

[JR] He's black.

[LL] I remember the name didn't mean anything to me. I remember he was black.

[JR] There was another young man that was black, that, I think he was the Commissioner for the License Bureau, and gentlemen, I sat at that desk and I cried. I really did. I just...

[LL] 40 years too late.

0:25:21 [JR] Not only that. I think the thing, what I really cried about was that, 40 years later, and I'll never forget I looked up at the sky and I said, "God, thank you". That you had the Joe Kernans and O'Bannons. You know, here's a man, black fella, and he's a superintendent? That made everything right for me. It was right close to Martin Luther King's birthday, and matter of fact, I still cry. I looked back up there and I said, "Dr. King, this would make you very happy". Mary Downes, who was Joe's assistant down state, happened to walk in and came in early that morning and she said, "Jack, are you okay?" I said, "Yes ma'am, I'm fine." She said, "What's the matter?" I said, "No, I'm okay". After I finally got myself together, I showed her the picture, and she said, "What's making you cry?" Then I shared the story with her, and she started crying. She mentions it to Joe Kernan, and that's how he found out about it. But, it just, I can't tell you, it's like...

[LL] That's, its important. You're right. You're one of the... things have been made right in that regard.

[JR] That's right. It didn't—

[LL] Why did it have to take 40 years?

0:26:43 [JR] And I don't know that I thought about that at that time. Just the idea that here's two people that, like I said, awareness and willing to do something about it, and did. The nice part about it, what's really nice about that team, they didn't stop there. I mean so many times it's just a tokenism thing. "Well I'll give them a couple and they'll be satisfied." Not with these folks, nah.

[GB] That's probably what you were worried about when you were offered this job originally. Weren't you? That it was a token.

0:27:13 [JR] No, not really. Money. I had a part, I was a salesman, I had a part time job where I was making real good money working two, three days a week as a salesman. What the Chief job got paid, as a Captain and a Battalion Chief I could make more. I was more interested in making money. That's what it's all about. My wife couldn't quite understand it. She

said, "I was just hoping that I would be the first lady of the South Bend Fire Department." I said, "Well I'm sorry, but you won't be." She was saying, "Well you can do it." I said, "I know I can do it, but that's not what it's all about. It's not what it's all about."

[LL] Well [inaudible] told me eventually that you didn't really have anything to tell me about this. You told us a lot.

0:27:58 [JR] Les, it's been very interesting. I think in my life, and just so many people that have been there for me. My uncle, I was telling you about, that brought us up here. When I first went on the Fire Department, I'll never forget, he said something to me. You know, he couldn't read or write, it's why my aunt had to sign his checks. He said, "Son, I wanna tell you one thing in life." He said, "If you go through life and do that which is right", he said, "you will never, ever go wrong". He said, "Son, they tell me you can spell the word right two or three different ways, is that true?" I said, "Yes, sir". "I always remember that." He said, "I know you have common sense, so therefore you know the difference between right and wrong, right?" I said, "Yes, sir." "Always follow that path and the good Lord'll see to it good things happen." That would be true.

[GB] John Harris?

[JR] Yes, senior.

0:28:50 [GB] I work for the John Harris Jr.

[JR] That was his son.

[GB] Over on Chalfant"

[JR] He lived on Bissel St. at one time, and then he built a house over on Twyckenham.

[GB] Must've been a different one.

[JR] Well, there was a Harris... a J. D. Harris - not the same family - that lived on Chalfant. No, he lived on Bissel, I think. But John lived on, Jr. lived on Bissel St., then he built that house over on Twyckenham. He died and worked, and he ended up working at Wheelabraters for a great number of years.

[GB] Yep, different John Harris Jr.

0:29:22 [JR] But, there were just a lot of people, you know, like I said, the Spike Kellys, and the Moe Morrisons, you know just a lot of people, Les, and the good Lord of course. My parents they made a lot of nice things happen, really a lot of nice things. It hasn't been easy I assure you. It's been tough.

When I was on the Fire Department, to be singled out. I remember guys would ask me when I would go to union, they would ask me: "Is there a reason that you always sit in the front when you go to unions?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Why?" I said, "Just in case there's things you folks have been saying before I got here, if I'm in front, you'll know I'm here." Little things like that. Or, when I got shipped off to Stations 9, Rudy [inaudible], I'll never forget, he said, "Jack, I'm the first black to ever go out there". I had noticed when I first went out hanging out at the flag or cutting grass people going down Mishawaka Avenue would just... I would just run into a pole, man, looking. They weren't vicious, just surprised. Rudy asked me, he said, "I notice every time that front door opens, you always get up and walk to the front. Why?" I said, "I just want people to know I'm here. Just in case there are things that have been said or done, I want you to know I'm here." He said, "Well you shouldn't have to do that." I said, "Darn right I shouldn't, but they eliminate problems."

[LL] It also allows you to take advantage of a disadvantage like you were talking about.

0:30:38 [JR] That's right, that's right. Utilizing that disadvantage to your advantage. There's a lot of ways that you can do that. Like I told Luther, "There's two things that are gonna happen, young man, if you learn to do that." Let me tell you this last thing. "You're gonna reach the ultimate or you're gonna lie down at night and know that you're giving 150%". That's right. Lucky enough, he reached the ultimate, he was Fire Chief.

[LL] That's terrific.

[JR] Great student.

[LL] You picked him up in '67 when he came?

0:31:07 [JR] No. Yeah, '67, and the reason I picked him is because his brother was here, and his aunt and uncle, and we were good friends. I was over at their house for breakfast, and she said, "I have to go pick my nephew up." I said, "I'll go get him". She said, "You don't even know what he looks like". I said, "Well, if he's coming from down South, he'll probably have a shirt, three-quarters, probably have a bag or a box or a rope wrapped around it." We laughed about it. When I got down to the bus station, he's just so big, and I could see this family resemblance. That's how we got to be friends. I tried talking him into coming on the Fire Department, but Luther's a machinist by trade. He said, "Nah." But he finally did. I'm saying, I'm not responsible for him coming on, but he finally decided it was the thing to do—

[Audio ends]